Lab earns DOD modeling, simulation award

by Tech. Sgt. Carl Norman, Air Force Materiel Command Public Affairs

MESA, Ariz. — Showcasing better and more effective ways to train, warfighter training research division experts here captured top honors in the Defense Department's 2002 Modeling and Simulation Award training category.

The training systems technology team earned the award that recognizes units, organizational elements and individuals for excellence, innovation and achievement in advancing "state-of-the-art" modeling and simulation. It is sponsored by the under secretary of defense for acquisition, technology and logistics.

"I'm very proud of our team," said Lt. Col. Stu Rodgers, Air Force Research Laboratory Mesa Research Site deputy commander. "They've made a number of substantial advancements in technology like visual systems and network simulation," said Lt. Col. Stu Rodgers, Air Force Research Laboratory Mesa Research Site deputy commander.

Rodgers said the integrated nature of war, high tech threats and military operations other than war are creating a training challenge for the Air Force and joint forces. Coupled with the need to process large amounts of data and information, warfighters require seamless systems and peacetime integrated operations environments that provide realistic mission training opportunities they don't currently have.

"The Air Force has embarked on revolutionizing training initiatives that...reduce dependence on aircraft as the primary-training media," he said. "Modeling and simulation are expected to provide on-demand, realistic training opportunities through an integrated operations environment composed of live, virtual and constructive training capabilities."

About 200 government workers and contractors at the site help make that vision a reality, according to Rodgers.

"Our unique combination of research and development expertise allows us to convert training needs into improved training methodologies and products," he said. "We work closely with other Air Force, Navy and Army laboratories, as well as with academia and industry."

The DOD award recognizes division members' work establishing systems that permit live players, simulated players and computer-generated players to be integrated in a high fidelity environment. The environment helps develop and sustain warfighter's learning and readiness skills, according to Dr. Winston Bennett, training systems technology team leader.

"DOD (officials are) on a path to truly transform training for 21st century warfighting. (Our) division is the Air Force's lead research organization for developing and demonstrating tools and technology that will help our warfighters maintain and extend the combat edge that has made us successful thus far," he said.

According to Bennett, division members' ability to develop high-fidelity tactical training and rehearsal methods and technology with the direct warfighter involvement is a key to continued success.

"We're the only place in the Air Force where engineering science and psychological science relate to how people learn and how they come together to support operational training needs," he said. "In fact, our work here is to develop an entirely new way to define readiness."

Bennett said the Mesa Research Site has teams come there to participate in research programs about two weeks out of every eight. While here, the warfighters are in research studies, which examine key research questions and evaluate new techniques for training and rehearsal.

"To them, the research is nearly transparent, and the gains they achieve in our research environment transfer directly to their performance at their home units," Bennett said. "This direct involvement ... in our research program helps to ensure that the very best practices and tools get to the field sooner rather than later." *@*